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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001550

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PINR](#) [SMIG](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: JUNE 1 REPATRIATION OF 162 HAITIAN MIGRANTS

REF: A. PAP 1274

[1](#)B. PAP 1375

[1](#)1. SUMMARY. On June 1, the Coast Guard cutter Confidence repatriated to Haiti 162 migrants who claimed to have departed Les Cayes on 19 May. The Confidence, the USCGC Metompkin and a USCG helicopter intercepted the migrants in a 65 foot sail freighter 60 nautical miles south of Andros Island, Bahamas on the afternoon of May 27. The migrants claimed that the length of their voyage was due to their passage close to Cuba in order to avoid USCG patrols. Among them was a family of eight including six children and their mother, eight months pregnant. Of the 162 migrants, 25 percent were female, 90 percent were younger than 40, and 10 percent were minors. Their boat was in fair condition and they had some provisions left at the time of interdiction. None of the migrants expressed credible fear of persecution. Some cited economic misery and unemployment as the reasons for their departure. Their stated destination was Miami. Some admitted to paying from USD20 to USD400 for passage. This is the third migrant repatriation in the past month (reftels). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. The migrants claimed to have departed from Morency, a village near Les Cayes on the southern coast of Haiti on April 19. Many migrants listed Les Cayes and Saint Louis du Sud as their home, although others said they were from Port-au-Prince. While this story seemed suspicious, a Haitian employee in PD confirmed that they were not northerners by their dress and accent. A couple of migrants said that they passed close to Cuba to avoid USCG patrols and had nearly reached Florida before their engine broke down and they began to drift. They received assistance from passing fisherman, who then reported the contact to the Royal Bahamian Defense Force. Because they were in shallow water on the Grand Bahama Bank, the Coast Guard employed multiple assets to direct the boat to deeper water where the passengers could be offloaded. The Confidence dropped the migrants at Killick Naval Base in Port-au-Prince on June 1, where the Haitian Coast Guard and the Office of National Migration processed them and gave them lunch, travel money (400 Gourdes, app. 10 dollars each) and t-shirts that read (Embassy informal translation): "Do not risk your life by getting on a migrant boat. You will never make it."

Medical Cases --

[1](#)3. Four migrants were evaluated and treated for medical concerns. One of the migrants was near death due to dehydration at the time of the interdiction. By June 1, he had responded to intravenous fluids and was eating a little. However, he remained extremely weak and the Haitian Coast Guard called an ambulance for him upon his arrival. A second man was suffering from elephantitis. The internal stitches of a third man, who reported sustaining a gunshot wound in April, appeared to be coming out of his skin. Lastly, a woman had taken to sea with her husband and five children, while eight months pregnant. Her husband, himself previously repatriated via Guantanamo Bay in 1998, said that they will not try again, as it is too dangerous.

Hard Cases --

[1](#)4. One migrant of note was Jean Milor Dare, a Haitian National Police officer who was a member of the Palace Security Unit before he departed. He stated that he asked for leave to return to his home of Les Cayes, then paid for passage aboard the vessel. Five migrants had been placed in shackles by the time they arrived in Port-au-Prince. Commander John Fitzgerald, Captain of the Confidence, reported that one man refused to follow instructions from the outset, but the rest simply appeared frustrated at the length of their voyage. Some migrants complained of being poorly fed.

[1](#)5. This group of migrants was somewhat atypical. After almost two weeks at sea, the migrants looked very weary, and some stated that they would not attempt the voyage again. The journey from the southern coast of Haiti is much longer and more difficult than from the northern coast. It appeared as if this group was much more of a communal effort, and a couple of them said that they only charged outsiders such as the HNP officer. END COMMENT.

